

SPECIAL MEETING – MANSFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
December 9, 2010

Mayor Elizabeth Paterson called the special meeting of the Mansfield Town Council to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Auditorium at EO Smith High School.

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Haddad, Keane, Kochenburger, Lindsey, Moran, Paterson, Paulhus, Ryan, Schaefer

II. Public Hearing

Development Agreement, Phases 1A and 1B, Town of Mansfield, Storrs Center Alliance, LLC and Education Realty Trust, Inc.

Mayor Paterson welcomed the public and asked the Town Clerk to read the legal notice for the public hearing. The Mayor noted that the Town Council asked staff to put together a presentation giving an overview of the project and has invited representatives of the major entities to be present to address any questions. Mayor Paterson read letters of support from Philip Lodewick, President of the Board of Directors for the Downtown Partnership and from UConn Interim President Philip Austin. (Letters attached). The Mayor also noted that all correspondence received will become part of the record.

Town Manager Matt Hart and Mansfield Downtown Partnership Executive Director Cynthia van Zelm described the projects and reviewed the major components of the agreement. (Outline of Key terms attached).

Tom Callahan, Associate Vice President of Operations at UConn, presented information on current water usage, availability, and steps taken by the University over the past 5 years including conservation, responsible development, reuse and exploring possible new sources of supply.

Andrew Graves, Principal and Architect, BL Companies and Macon Toledano, Vice President of Planning and Development from Leyland Alliance presented schematics of the buildings, described the floor plans of the buildings and the town square area.

Tom Trubiana, Chief Investment Officer and Executive Vice President of EDR, addressed some of the confusion regarding the plans of the company for this project. He stated that EDR understands and shares the vision of the community and wants to be part of the community long term. Mr. Trubiana described some similar market rate multi family projects recently undertaken by the company.

Mayor Paterson recognized members of the public wishing to address the Council.

Katherine Dorgan, Eastwood Road, voiced support for the project commenting that it is a great deal for all and urged the Council to move forward.

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Bart Pacekonis, South Windsor resident and representing Tolland and Windham County tradesmen, congratulated the Council on the project and urged the employment of local workers. He asked the Council to consider the inclusion of Project Labor Agreements (PLA) in the development agreement.

Ben Sachs, Gurleyville Road, commented that currently "there is no here, here in Storrs" and voiced support for the project.

Bruce Clouette, Woodland Road, noted that years ago he was skeptical of the project but that over the years his concerns have been addressed and he supports moving forward. He stated that the current project is close to ideal incorporating open space, energy efficiencies, public transportation, environmentally responsible development and providing a mix of businesses to the area. Mr. Clouette noted that after 10 years of effort, the Town has made its own independent assessment of the project and the proposed development agreement limits the risk.

Janet Jones, Wormwood Hill Road, spoke in favor of the project and commented that we are finally close to having a truly wonderful downtown.

Maria Cantino, Dog Lane, expressed her concerns that diminishing state support for the Town will further reduce the Storrs area of Town and urged support for the project.

Peter Millman, Dog Lane, commented that EDR has the experience to build mixed use housing and that there is a significant demand in the area for high quality apartments. Mr. Millman questioned why would Leyland Alliance chose a partner who would build student housing thereby devaluing their project. He urged support for the agreement.

Peter Sudie, Clark Street, since moving to Town has wondered where the center of Town is and where quality rental units might be found. He voiced support for the project.

Barry Schreier, South Eagleville Road, commented that a great number of people in Town are in favor of the project and he applauded the effort it has taken to get to this point, noting there has been ample opportunity for the public to express their opinions. Mr. Schreier feels the Town has done the due diligence necessary and urged acceptance of the agreement.

Lynn Stoddard, Ravine Road, remarked that the project offers opportunities for economic development, is sustainable, and will offer residents a place to meet. She urged support.

Ruth Moynihan, Farrell Road, thanked everyone for their hard work and only requested that the project be done right. Ms. Moynihan expressed some concerns for the fate of the Thai restaurant on Dog Lane; applauded the transfer of acreage to the Town by the University but asked that prior to transfer the fallen trees be removed; noted that some of her concerns regarding the focus of EDR's plan have been alleviated, urged the marketing of the apartments be carefully thought out and supported the hiring of local trades people for the project.

Gary Zimmer, Dog Lane, supports the project and congratulated the Town on its ability to successfully integrate commercial, environmental, transportation and housing concerns. Mr. Zimmer did question whether the cost to the developer for parking should be higher to help sustain the development.

Steve Bacon, Wormwood Hill Road, urged approval and adoption of the agreement and stated his agreement with the comments of Bruce Clouette.

Tom Birkenholz, South Eagleville Road, spoke in favor of the project and voiced his appreciation for the research and planning the Town has undertaken calling it a great service to the community.

Jay Rueckl, South Eagleville Road, commented that with many issues facing the Town in the near future like school and senior center renovations, we are currently too reliant on state revenue and need a downtown to help with the tax base. As to who will live downtown, Mr. Rueckl believes it will be adults.

Larry Ross, Thomas Drive, as a realtor is often asked where the best place to rent in Mansfield is and currently there are no options. He urged adoption of the agreement.

Michael Taylor, Stonemill Road, stated that concerns over students living in the apartments can be alleviated by a good management team. The same good management will be needed for the success of the commercial area. Mr. Taylor thinks that EDR is a strong healthy company who should be able to do the things necessary for a successful enterprise.

Jane Blanshard, Glen Ridge, stated that she is not interested in her taxes going to support UConn and that over the years she has seen many shops come and go. Ms. Blanshard would like to see a referendum held on the project.

Ida Millman, Sycamore Drive, urged support for agreement stating that from conception the project has been realistic in its goals.

Bryan Grenier, Warrenville Road, grew up in Mansfield and feels that implementation of the project would help keep people in the area. Mr. Grenier is a member of Local 24 and supports the hiring of local trades people to do the work.

Brian Anderson, Ridge Road, saluted the Town for their efforts on this project and urged consideration of the inclusion of PLA into the agreement. (Statement attached)

Ted Jordan, Moulton Road, asked the Council to do it right and hire local people. He also urged the Council to closely examine the water issue, look into the road to nowhere and feels that if Pfzier had been built it would have been a disaster.

Julie Wright, Glen Ridge, expressed concern at the possible heights of the buildings and asked for the inclusion of shops that would address everyday needs, like a grocery store. Ms. Wright would like a referendum to be held.

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Tulay Luciano, Warrenville Road, asked the Town Attorney whether the project was legal since it has never been brought to referendum, how many gallons of water will the project use on a daily basis, and if the state funding is secure. Ms. Luciano also requested a copy of Mr. Callahan's presentation. The Town Attorney stated the process has been legal. The Town Manager noted the state funding is secure but in case the Town does not receive the expected funds the agreement would relieve the Town of its obligations.

Betty Wassmundt, Old Turnpike Road, requested a referendum be held regarding the Storrs Center Project and suggested that an additional public forum be scheduled without any presentations. Ms. Wassmundt asked if there is an agreement between the Town and Storrs Center Alliance and if not why is the Town involved in the agreement. Ms. Wassmundt asked that all Councilors who have any connection with the University recuse themselves from voting. Town Manager Matt Hart commented that it is the Town that received the grant money and the Town that has the authority to approve tax abatements.

Cynthia Hirschorn, Davis Road, spoke in support of the project and urged the Council to move forward. Ms. Hirschorn sees no need to have a referendum as the Town officials are elected to make decisions and clearly, as indicated by tonight's meeting, the public is in support of the project.

Winkie Gordon, Wildwood Road, commented that healthy growth is organic and not imposed and asked what is the overall criterion for determining the success of the project. Ms. Gordon asked when taxpayers will have input.

Sharry Goldman, Browns Road, expressed concern with the addition of EDR to the project. Ms. Goldman does not see the company as a good fit and is not comfortable with their history and background.

Bruce Goldman, Brown Road, while still in favor of the project also expressed concern with the inclusion of EDR. Mr. Goldman commented that EDR specializes in student housing. He urged the public to read EDR's annual report.

Carl Nagy Jr., Pleasant Valley Road, voiced support for the inclusion of local jobs in the project.

Carl Nagy Sr., Pleasant Valley Road, supports the project and the inclusion of local jobs.

Gene Nesbitt, Wormwood Hill Road, expressed concern with the net revenue projections projected for the project. Mr. Nesbitt noted that the current projections are different from previously presented ones and asked if the Council has seen detailed budgets for the projects. He also asked what safeguards are in place if only Phase 1A and 1B are built. Mr. Nesbitt complimented the Town on the level of progress over the last year and a half.

Town Manager Matt Hart replied that there have significant changes in the size of Phase one since the earlier projections and noted the developer is committed to 1A and 1B and that the public infrastructure included in this phase will facilitate additional development.

Matt Proser, Glen Ridge, commented that he has seen the Storrs area of Town deteriorate over the years and asked what assurances are in place that this plan will work.

Town Manager Matt Hart stated that in any project there are always risks and the Town has worked hard to mitigate those risks. The developers are required, in the agreement, to build to certain levels.

Michael Allison, Gurleyville Road, stated that although he has supported the project since inception he wanted to address a couple of questions. As to whether there has been sufficient public input, Mr. Allison noted that votes have been taken at town meetings where opponents presented alternatives and have been defeated. Mr. Allison also finds the visceral distaste for EDR interesting and stated the EDR is now moving into a new area of development and that Leyland Alliance is fortunate to find such a partner.

David Morse, Birchwood Heights Road, feels that although the time for referendum has passed there are still a number of questions to address including the inclusion of a labor agreement, addition of affordable housing, a potential water problem, finding anchor stores and the possibility of a legal nightmare. (Statement attached)

Howard Kaufman, Leyland Alliance, reported they already have 12 letters of intent and are optimistic that suitable anchor stores will be signed.

Marty Hirschorn, Davis Road, started off skeptical of the project but as he became more involved his level of confidence has increased. Mr. Hirschorn has been impressed with the open process, and the opportunity to create jobs and a sense of community. Our other choice is to keep the current eyesore.

Lawrence Armstrong, Glen Ridge, expressed appreciation for the expertise of the evening's panel and feels the plan is environmentally sound and has the makings of a first class project.

Peggy Beckett Rinker, Hillside Circle, thanked all who participated in the project including the many citizens who have volunteered their time and likened the process to one that happened in Branford. She supports the Downtown Partnership and approval of the agreement.

Martin Sommer, Warrenville Road, feels the Town needs a downtown and supports the new proposed phasing. Mr. Sommer did question whether the structure of the parking fees for the developer is sufficient to cover the costs the Town will incur. He also asked the Council to carefully review the potential water requirements for this and other projects.

Stephen Squires lamented the lack of affordable housing in the project and increased taxation in the form of fee based parking.

Chris Kueffner, Ravine Road, complimented the Council on the open process and their choice of Leyland Alliance as the developer. He thanked the developer for their patience during this process.

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Mr. Ryan moved and Ms. Moran seconded to close the public hearing.
Motion passed unanimously.

III. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Schaefer moved and Ms. Keane seconded to adjourn the meeting
Motion passed unanimously.

Elizabeth Paterson, Mayor

Mary Stanton, Town Clerk

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